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SUBJECT: GAMBARI BRIEFS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: UN Special Adviser on Burma Ibrahim Gambari briefed the UN General Assembly by invitation on December 18. In keeping with his measured public approach, Gambari opened by recalling recent, positive developments such as the release of many of those detained during the September crackdown and the willingness of the Burmese leadership to engage with the UN. He reported, however, that arrests continue, many Burmese are still imprisoned including ASSK, the regime has not set a date for dialogue, and the generals risked undermining the credibility of the National Convention because of its exclusion of primary stakeholders. Gambari observed that the international community showed unprecedented interest in Burma and cited his regional travel and consultation with P-5, ASEAN, and EU capitals, adding that ASEAN countries viewed sanctions as counterproductive. The Burmese PR Swe said that Burma will "resolutely implement" its seven step roadmap and that further pressure would be counterproductive. He maintained that cooperation with the United Nations remains a cornerstone of Burmese foreign policy. End Summary.

Some Positive Signs

¶2. (SBU) During his briefing to the General Assembly on Burma, Gambari highlighted the "clear indication of support" from Burmese authorities for the good offices mission. He also welcomed their commitment to cooperate with the United Nations. Gambari outlined several positive results of his two visits to Burma, including the regime's move to lift curfews; its release of 7,200 persons, including 700 monks; General Than Shwe's commitment to meet with Aung Sun Suu Kyi (ASSK) under "certain" conditions; and the appointment of a 54 member Constitutional Drafting Committee. He also listed what he described as "promising developments" in Burma: the regime's permission to release ASSK's statement, ASSK's meeting with the NLD and her meetings with her liaison officer, and the regime's decision to permit Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Pinheiro to visit Burma. He further referred to the regime's consent to establish a Poverty Alleviation Commission as a positive move.

No Beef

¶3. (SBU) Gambari reported, however, that the regime had yet to address "basic concerns." Arrests continue, he said, and there are still a number of political prisoners. The Burmese have not set a date for dialogue, he continued, nor have they released ASSK or at the very least relaxed the conditions of her arrest to enable her to fully participate in dialogue. Gambari observed that the exclusion of key stakeholders and ethnic parties in the National Convention risked undermining the Government of Burma's credibility and the credibility of their roadmap. The regime needs to propose a timeline for next steps, he said. Gambari recalled his hope to act on an earlier Burmese invitation to visit "again and again and again," but argued his visits must produce results.

International Support

¶14. (SBU) Never has the international community been so united on the issue of Burma, Gambari said, noting that there was unprecedented interest by the international community. He recounted his recent visit to ASEAN countries in the region as well as his travel to several capitals, including Tokyo, Beijing, New Delhi, Moscow, and Washington. Countries in the region saw the good offices effort as the "central track," he said, but also considered sanctions counterproductive.

Burmese reaction

¶15. (SBU) Burmese PR Swe welcomed Gambari's accomplishments as an UN envoy despite "undue pressure put on him by influential members of our Organization." He also listed Burma's "notable developments," including the restoration of peace and stability, lifting of the curfew, and moving forward to step three (meeting of the Constitutional Drafting Committee) on the regime's roadmap. In listing further accomplishments, PR Swe emphasized the "tangible results" of Gambari's good offices mission and quoted Gambari's phrase that the good offices is "not an event, but a process." He added that further political pressure would be counterproductive and stated that the Burmese will "resolutely implement" their seven step roadmap. He repeated that "cooperation with the United Nations is the cornerstone of (Burmese) Foreign Policy," and confirmed that Burma will continue to cooperate with the good offices role of the Secretary-General.

Other delegations

¶16. (SBU) On behalf of ASEAN, Singapore PR Menon recalled Burma's objection to Gambari's briefing at both the EAS and

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ASEAN Summits. He reiterated ASEAN's 19 November statement noting that Burma requested ASEAN to "step aside" and that Burma said they would deal directly with the UN and international community. He added that ASEAN responded with a call for Burma to "move forward" as the status quo was unacceptable. The Portuguese PR spoke for the EU and said that the appointment of an EU envoy indicated the importance of the issue for the EU. Incoming Security Council member Vietnam stated that as a neighbor, it was "natural" for Vietnam to be concerned with peace and stability in Burma since "peace and stability in (Burma) affected peace and stability in the region." The Egyptian PR opposed the human rights resolution on Burma. Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, and Nigeria delivered remarks supportive of Gambari's efforts and welcoming his briefing in the General Assembly.

Khalilzad